DEMOCRATIC
GERMAN REPORT

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IN EAST BERLIN

— 700,000 Demonstrate Against Wehrmacht

More than 700,000 young people from both halves of Germany demonstrated in East Berlin at Whitsun against the formation of a new fascist Wehrmacht in West Germany.

Just before midnight on Whit-Monday, June 7th, the participants in the gigantic rally assembled on the vast Marx-Engels-Platz and solemnly pledged themselves to continue their struggle against the new Wehrmacht and for the conclusion of a peace treaty with a unified Germany.

Most of the weekend had been taken up with sports-shows, international football matches, and displays both by amateur youth groups and by such outstanding international groups as the members of the Moscow and Leningrad ballets at present visiting Berlin.

All attempts made by West Berlin groups to lure young people over to West Berlin with free food handouts and free cowboy films in the cinemas broke down completely.

(More details on page 87)

. . . AND THIS IS WEST BERLIN

A Nazi rally in 1934? No, a meeting of the militarist "Stahlhelm" (Steel Helmets) in the Funkturm Kasino, West Berlin, on Bismarck's birthday, 1954

EAST GERMANS TO CHOOSE:

WEHRMACHT OR UNITY

The people of East Germany will go to the polls at the end of June to make their own decision on the path which Germany must take in the coming period.

They will vote on the following question:

"Are you in favour of a peace treaty and the withdrawal of occupation troops?

or

Are you in favour of the EDC treaty and the Bonn Treaty, and the presence of occupation troops for the next fifty years?"

(The European Defence Community (EDC) Treaty provides for the establishment of a new West Germany Wehrmacht, and the Bonn Treaty provides that the western allies shall have the deciding word on all vital problems, and shall have the right to keep their occupation troops in Germany.)

The decision to hold the plebiscite in East Germany was taken on May 26th by the People's Chamber of the German Democratic Republic, following a request made by the National Congress of delegates from both East and West Germany who met in Berlin ten days earlier.

The National Congress also appealed to the West German parliament to hold a similar plebiscite there, but it was announced in the West German capital of Bonn that the request would be ignored.

Announcing the decision to hold the plebiscite on June 27th to 29th, the East German People's Chamber stated:

"We appeal to all citizens, all parties, organisations and institutions to prepare for the plebiscite by developing to the full the discussion of its great political significance, and to make the plebiscite a mighty deed in favour of a peace treaty and the withdrawal of all occupation troops.

"The German people themselves must decide about the future of Germany, since Germany belongs to the German people."

West Germans Choose Unity

The overwhelming majority of West Germans believe that the reunification of East and West Germany is more urgent than the plans for a unified West Europe.

This was clearly shown by a public opinion poll held by the EMNID Institute, Bielefeld, British Zone of West Germany, at the end of May. 63% of the cross-section of the population consulted considered that German reunification was the most urgent task: just over half this number, 33% thought West European unification more urgent, and 4 % had no opinion.

HOW THE PLEBISCITE WILL BE RUN

Here are some extracts from the plebiscite regulations, issued by the Government of the German Democratic Republic on May 26th 1954:

1. The plebiscite ... will be held on June 27th, 28th and 29th from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily.

2. All German men, women and young people entitled to vote will receive a ballot like this (see illustration). Approval of one of the questions is to be indicated by making a cross in the appropriate circle.

3. Voting is direct and secret. Each voter has only one vote. Permanent residents in the German Democratic Republic and the Democratic Sector of Berlin, who have completed their 18th year on June 26th 1954, and who are not excluded from electoral rights are entitled to vote.

Young persons who have completed their 16th year on June 26th 1954 will also be permitted to vote.

The official ballots will be on white paper: ballots for young people between the ages of 16 and 18 will be on coloured paper.

4. The following persons are not entitled to vote:

a. Those deprived of civic rights.

b. Persons being treated for mental sickness, persons legally not responsible ...

c. Those deprived of their electoral privileges by order of a court ...

(Paragraphs 5-9 of the regulations lay down the technical details, such as the division of the country into electoral districts and wards: the establishment of plebiscite commissions consisting of nine voters in each locality: the provision of special voting stations in hospitals, etc.)

10. Electoral rolls will be prepared by the plebiscite chairman in each district, and will be open for inspection from June 12th to June 26th inclusive. Special lists will be prepared for young people aged between 16 and 18 ...

Each voter can deliver his vote only in that ward in which he is registered. This does not apply to those holding absent voter's cards, issued to those who are prevented from being in their home ward on polling day.

11. The vote will be given on the official voting paper. Votes given on other papers are void.

12. The plebiscite commissions will determine the result of the plebiscite in their districts ... The plebiscite chairman of the Republic will publish the final results.

13. The further regulations necessary will be issued by the Minister of the Interior of the German Democratic Republic.

HERE IS THE BALLOT

Are you in favour of a peace treaty and the withdrawal of the occupation troops?	Are you in favour of EDC, the Bonn Treaty and of occupation troops remaining for 50 years?
○	○

WHITSUN RALLY IN BERLIN

W. Germans Try to Ban Festival

The West German authorities made feverish efforts to prevent West German young people from travelling to Berlin to attend the Whitsun Rally.

The West German Ministry of the Interior declared quite illegally on May 26th that West Germans attending the Whitsun Rally made themselves liable to punishment, since the aims of the rally were "contrary to the West German Constitution." (The officially published aims of the rally were to "foster a spirit of peace, unity and freedom amongst young people in all parts of Germany").

Special squads of West German police searched all trains from West Germany bound for Berlin, and ejected all "suspicious" young people whom they encountered, even though they held all necessary travel documents. In many cases they used their batons brutally when the young people refused to leave the trains.

Throughout West Germany leaders of the Free German Youth movement were rounded up in surprise police raids. The Free German Youth was declared an illegal organisation two years ago by the West German Ministry of the Interior, but the West German courts have failed to uphold this decree.

On May 2nd the Government of the German Democratic Republic officially protested against the measures being taken by the West German authorities against travellers bound for East Germany.

"These terrorist measures are directed against the will to unity on the part of the German people, and are intended to prevent Germans from East and West speaking with each other," the protest stated. "These measures are not only an attack on the great rally of German youth, but also a serious obstacle to the development of inner-German travel: as such they are liable to have an adverse effect upon the smooth functioning of the all-German Evangelical Church Conference (to be held at Leipzig, East Germany in July)."

Despite all bans, over 25,000 young men and women from West Germany reached Berlin for the rally.

Youth Pledge

(Pledge taken by young people from all parts of Germany rallied in Berlin on June 7th.)

We German youths and girls, who have come together in Berlin to the 2nd Germany Rally as the representatives of the youth of our entire homeland, take this solemn pledge:

We shall devote our entire strength to achieve the peaceful reunification of Germany.

We know that our lives will be made secure if the European Defence Community and German militarism can be stopped, and we therefore give this pledge:

We shall struggle with all our knowledge and ability, and with great love toward our homeland to achieve a happy life for the youth of the whole of Germany.

We know that the unity of Germany youth represents an invincible force in the establishment of a united, peaceful and democratic Germany, and we therefore make this pledge:

Always to work towards the end that all young Germans should combine their strength to reach this goal.

We know that the peaceful young people of the whole world are our trusty helpers in this difficult struggle and we pledge:

Always to work for the strengthening of the bonds of friendship with the youth of the world.

We are now returning to our towns, villages and factories and we pledge:

In our work for the plebiscite to win the entire German youth for the conclusion of a peace treaty and the withdrawal of the occupation troops.

SABOTAGE ATTEMPTS FAIL

West Berlin sabotage organisations made a large scale effort to disorganise the Whitsun Youth Rally in Berlin by sending forged invitations and orders to thousands of people in all parts of Germany.

False invitations, with forged coupons allegedly offering free accomodation and meals were sent to worker journalists in many factories, for instance; the secretaries of Free German Youth groups in other factories received forged letters of instruction telling them to cancel their trip to Berlin and instead to work overtime during the Whitsun holidays.

Thanks to the vigilance of the East German youth movement most of the forgeries were exposed in good time, but an extra load of work was thrown upon sections of the organisation since the large scale of the sabotage efforts made a double check on all orders and papers necessary.

During the Whitsun weekend itself, efforts were made to disrupt the festivities in East Berlin by luring young people into West Berlin with promises of free meals, free western pictures in the cinemas, and a few football matches. These attempts failed miserably, since sport and cultural events in East Berlin were so much more interesting.

Various western sabotage organisations, including the notorious "Fighting Group against Inhumanity", which receives a large subsidy from the U. S. Ford Foundation, spent a lot of time and trouble in dropping war-mongering leaflets on the young people in East Berlin. Meteorological balloons, made by the firm of Dewey & Almy of Cambridge Masachusetts, and supplied to the "Fighting Group" from US Army stocks, were used to drop the leaflets. "Leaflet mortars" fired from the sector boundaries were also used, and one People's Policeman in East Berlin was seriously injured when one of these bombs exploded just beside him.

Bigger Pensions for "Kondor Legion"

The West German Government announced on May 25th that former officers and men of the nazi army who fought for Franco in Spain will in future receive increased pensions.

The announcement, issued by Gerhard Schroeder, Minister of the Interior, former nazi party member, stated: "The members of the former Kondor Legion who fought in Spain continued to be professional members of the Wehrmacht during this period, and are therefore justified in demanding that this period of service be taken into consideration when their pensions are granted."

(The widows of German anti-fascists who died fighting against Franco in Spain are not entitled to pensions in West Germany, however. A recent court decision there laid down that a German who went to Spain to fight in the International Brigade had in effect committed suicide, and that his widow was not entitled to help under the law assuring pensions to victims of nazism.)

MARTIN ANDERSEN NEXO DIES

The great Danish writer Martin Andersen Nexö died in Dresden, German Democratic Republic, on June 1st 1954 at the age of 84.

Nexö, famed author of "Ditte — Human Child" and many other novels of great social significance, came to live in the German Democratic Republic four years ago. He was a firm supporter of the World Peace Movement, and Holder of the National Prize of the German Democratic Republic.

NEW PRICE CUT IN EAST GERMANY

Prices for cigars, tinned fish and several other articles were reduced again in the German Democratic Republic on June 8th.

Main reductions were:

Biscuits, chocolate biscuits, wafers etc: one third cheaper

Pigskin shoes: reduced 40%

Bacon, suet, lard (free market price): one fifth cheaper

Tinned salmon, various other tinned fish: between 10% and 20% reduction

Cigars: one fifth cheaper.

West Germany 1945

West Germany 1954

West German Minister Aids Anti-Semites

West German "Minister for Refugees", Theodor Oberlaender, has accepted honorary membership in the "Society of Hungarian Veterans", a group of Hungarian quislings living in West Germany who indulge in anti-Semitic propaganda. Oberlaender was a major in Hitler's storm troops.

The facts about his honorary membership of this anti-Semitic group were made public in the West German capital of Bonn on June 3rd, when the American Jewish Committee issued a report there on the anti-Semitic propaganda of a number of such emigrant groups, including the "Russian State and Freedom Movement", the Hungarian "Arrow Cross" group, the "Slovak Liberation Committee" and the Rumanian "Iron Guard".

The report stated that most of the leading members of these groups were nazi collaborators.

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In His Knapsack?

Heinz Sauritz, Flensburg shopkeeper, was ordered on May 28 by the district court of Flensburg, West Germany, to pay damages of 20,000 marks to the wife of Admiral Raeder, serving a life sentence for war crimes in Spandau Prison.

Sauritz was found guilty of losing Admiral Raeder's marshal's staff when he served as his orderly in the Second World War.

"PEAT BOG SOLDIERS" MARCH AGAIN

The Peat Bog Soldier

Far and wide as the eye can wander
Heath and bog are everywhere.
Not a bird sings out to cheer us,
Oaks are standing gaunt and bare.

(Chorus)
We are the peat bog soldiers;
We're marching with our spades
To the bog

Up and down the guards are pacing
No one, no one can go through.
Flight would mean a sure death facing;
Guns and barbed wire greet our view.

(Chorus)
But for us there is no complaining,
Winter will in time be past;
One day we shall cry rejoicing,
Homeland dear you're mine at last.

(Final chorus)
Then will the peat bog soldiers
March no more with their spades
To the bog

The "Peat Bog Soldiers" — political prisoners in the notorious Emsland Concentration Camp in North Germany, are on the march again.

Herbert Beyer, sentenced to prison for distributing the perfectly legal Communist "Programme for the National Reunification of Germany", has been informed that he will shortly be shipped to Emsland, where the prisoners have to do back-breaking forced labour in the peat bogs. He was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment by the West German Supreme Court at Karlsruhe on May 6th 1954.

Emsland concentration camp became world famous early in the nazi era, owing to the fact that Socialist, Communist and trade union members herded together there in 1933 wrote and composed the song "Peat Bog Soldiers", which they sung in defiance of their SS guards. (An English translation of the song is printed on this page.)

Writing from prison to his wife at the end of May to give her the news, Herbert Beyer stated:

"This just confirms what we stated at the trial: the path being taken is the same as in 1933.

"So now I am going to become one of the peat bog soldiers: thousands of the very best Germans were there before me."

West Court Confirms Nazi Sentence

The criminal court at Dortmund, British Zone of West Germany, has just confirmed a sentence of "High Treason" passed by a nazi court in 1933.

On December 12th 1933, eleven months after Hitler came to power, Dortmund Court found Communist leader Josef Ledwohn guilty of "high treason" because of his underground work against Hitler. Since the Gestapo could not find Ledwohn, sentence was not promulgated.

21 years later, in May 1954, the court blew the dust off the old nazi file, and sentenced Ledwohn to 18 months imprisonment as a result of the old nazi conviction. Ledwohn is today a member of the Central Board of the West German Communist Party, and one of the leading Communist candidates in the provincial elections in North Rhine Westphalia on June 27th.

Dulles: "A fine fit"
("Krokodil", Moscow)

People's Police Catch SS Man

People's Police in East Berlin at the end of May arrested a veteran SS man and concentration camp guard who had managed to evade detection since the end of the war.

After his arrest the SS man, named Karl Theiner, made a full statement admitting that he had worked from 1940 to 1945 in a number of concentration camps, including Dachau, Ravensbrueck and Mauthausen. During this period he personally murdered about 300 prisoners with poisonous injections, and took part in many fatal medical experiments involving prisoners.

"France is Not Great Power" — West Berlin Newspaper

"One of the big mistakes which was made in 1945 was to count France as one of the great world powers" the West Berlin newspaper "Tag", official organ of West German Chancellor Adenauer's Christian Democrats stated on May 30th.

"France is to be blamed for the fact that for years the policy of the west has run around in circles. If the EDC should break down, West Germany will find ways and means enough of protecting its interests with the methods at its disposal."

SS "Hitler Youth" Division Plans Rally

Veterans of the SS "Hitler Youth" Division plan a great rally of all survivors of this nazi elite unit in Kassel, West Germany, on June 19th and 20th. High point of the rally will be a march through the streets of the city, headed by the banners of the division.

Nazi victims in Kassel have organised a massive protest against this nazi rally, and the Major of the city has already received many letters and resolutions calling for its banning.

Nazi Spy Sits in West German Parliament

A leading nazi spy is one of the members of the government coalition in the West German parliament today.

His name is Paul Leverkuehn, and he himself gives the facts about his wartime espionage activities for the nazis in his book "German Military Intelligence" just published in Britain by the firm of Weidenfeld and Nicolson, price 16/—.

THE PROBLEM OF GERMANY

By D. N. Pritt, Queen's Counsel

(In an address to the World Peace Council, Berlin, May 24th)

It is appropriate that we should discuss the problem of Germany and E. D. C. here in Berlin, in the midst of ruin and of reconstruction, in the midst of the vivid and detailed illustrations of what the division of Germany means both to Germans and to the world.

We start with certain incontrovertible facts. The victoricus allies agreed together, both before and after the end of the Second World War, in treaties which surely represented correct policy, and which none of them has any excuse to break, that Germany should be reunited as one country and state, unarmed, democratic. This was agreed not for the advantage of those who now hold financial and industrial power in West Germany, but to help in securing a peaceful future for all the peoples of Europe.

The policy which the Western Powers now seek to cary through is a policy that Western Germany should be massively rearmed, as an integral part of a "European Defence Community" and that her army should be part of a vast armed force formed by most of the countries of Western Europe and by the USA. This is a policy which makes it de facto impossible to reunite Germany; and it has nothing in common with any democratic government of Germany, if only because it bans what every German wants, in one form or another, namely, a government of one whole Germany by Germans, Germans at one table.

What pretexts are advanced by the originators and supporters of this policy, which breaks solemn agreements, perpetuates a divided Germany, leads to endless misery and unrest, embraces many dangers of war, and is contrary to all the principles of the Charter of the UNO?

The main pretext, accompanied by various subsidiary excuses, was originally that there was a danger that the USSR might over-run Western Europe by force of arms, and that it was accordingly necessary to rearm Germany, as well as other European countries, to resist such aggression.

This scare story was once widely accepted, but no one now seriously believes in it. There is not a tittle of evidence that the Soviet Union had or has any such intention and admissions to this effect can be quoted from the writings and speeches of the most prominent anti-Soviet political and military leaders of the USA, the very men who originated the demand for the rearmament of West Germany, and who are now attempting to bully and blackmail France into urgent acceptance of the policy, even whilst they confess the emptiness of the pretexts they advance.

What can be their real motive? And what can be the real motive of the powerful German industrial, financial and military groupings which, at the will of the USA, now control the policies of Western Germany behind a facade of parliamentary democracy? It is not for me to read their minds; but, however strong their protestations of defensive intentions, it is difficult to see any other logical purpose in their acts than preparation for a war to be launched one day against the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies.

The motive of the West German rulers emerges plainly; their political head, Chancellor Adenauer, put it thus: —

"The return of the lost provinces beyond the Oder-Neisse line is the principal reason guiding the German Government in favouring the integration of the Federation (ie. West Germany) into Europe and into the organisation of the Atlantic Powers" (NATO). "The integration of a sovereign Germany into the defensive system of the West, with the military participation which that implies — that is to say, the European Army — constitutes the only sure and rapid means of recovering our lost provinces."

And again the same Chancellor, after the recent elections, said on September 7th 1953:

"We have always spoken of the reunification of Germany; should we not now speak of the liberation of the East? No matter how you voted yesterday, let us close our ranks and work together for the liberation of the territories of the East."

So there we see the essential spirit of "revanchism", a policy well understood by the restored industrial leaders and the Nazi generals who have come out of their holes and their prisons to "defend Western Europe". Their first and most open clamour, their "principal reason" for going into the new policy, is to start a European war in order to take from Poland the great Polish territories which were restored to their homeland after the war.

And it was to support and carry through this policy that the allies in effect sabotaged in advance the Berlin Conference of January and February last; for how can one seriously discuss a reunion of Germany when one side of the Conference insists on going forward with rearmament in the western half of it for the purpose of starting a war against the Eastern neighbours of the Eastern half of it?

I mentioned subsidiary excuses. One of the many of these is that, as Western Germany is sure to rearm in any case, it is better that she should do so "under the control" of the Western Powers, within EDC!

What does this mean? It means this: —

"We, the Western Powers, are so weak (or is it so treacherous?) that, although we have solemnly agreed not to allow Western Germany, which we occupy and control, to rearm, we are incapable of stopping her, even when she is unarmed! So let us encourage her to rearm with us, in EDC, and when she has thereby added vast military strength to her present industrial strength, we shall then by some alchemy be able and willing to control her, ie., to ensure somehow that she shall neither increase her forces beyond what we plan for her, nor use them in wars of which we do not approve."

They resemble a housebreaker who, finding himself unable to prevent a burglar breaking into his house, decides to supply him with housebreaking tools.

And it is quite natural — however ominous — that Sir Winston Churchill has already been hinting to the House of Commons that, if Germany rearms, Britain will have to increase her own armaments as counterpoise to this new addition to the world's capacity for organised killing.

Another pretext advanced by protagonists of Western German rearmament in Britain is that unless

Resolutions Passed by WORLD PEACE COUNCIL (Berlin May 1954)

ON SECURITY

The threats of U.S.A. military intervention in the conflict in Indo-China, which would be liable to lead to a new world war; the pressure brought to bear to set up the European Defence Community, which would sanction the rearmament of Germany; the division of Europe and Asia by the policy of military pacts; the repeated H-bomb experiments, one aim of which is intimidation and blackmail — all these have given the peoples, in whom hopes had been roused by negotiations, fresh reasons for anxiety.

The pressure of world public opinion wihch secured the armistice in Korea and the opening of negotiations on European and Asian problems, can to-day secure:

— a successful outcome to the Geneva Conference, that is to say, a cease-fire in Indo-China, and a peaceful settlement of the Korean and Indo-Chinese conflicts;

— rejection of the agreements on the European Defence Community and a resumption of negotiations for the peaceful solution of the German question;

— agreement by the Governments to stop all experiments with H-bombs and atom bombs and forbid their use.

Despite differences of political or social system, all peoples have common interests. These common interests cannot be protected, and the security of each and the independence of the peoples cannot be guaranteed by atomic blackmail and the division of the world into military blocs. Likewise, these common interests are harmed by repression of national liberation movements or by the intervention of any state in the internal affairs of any other.

A nation can only guarantee its own security by ensuring that of every other nation. Security for all must be organised, most urgently in Asia and Europe, with participation of all the States concerned, whatever their differences of political or social system.

ON ATOMIC WEAPONS

Weapons of indiscriminate slaughter now threaten all mankind. The conscience of the world is awakening. Parliaments and statesmen, the most eminent leaders of thought and religion, speak out in protest.

In the name of mankind, we call for agreement, at once, to stop all experiments with H-bombs and atom bombs and forbid their use.

Agreement of this kind will ease the task of securing their effective total abolition.

Agreement of this kind will help quickly to relieve international tension; it will help forward the general reduction of armaments; it will open the way to collaboration in the peaceful development of atomic energy.

We call upon all bodies and individuals concerned with peace, upon political, social, trade union, religious and cultural organisations, upon men and women in every country, to consult together, nationally and internationally, on how best to obtain agreement by the governments to prohibit, under strict international control, which is wholly practicable, the manufacture, use or storage of all weapons of mass destruction.

Western Germany is to some extent crippled by having to devote large sums to military expenditure, she will defeat Britain in the competition for world trade.

Well, let us in the Peace movement see to it that Peace forces rescue Britain's industries by securing a lessening of British armament expenditure instead of an increase of German.

One must not overlook the further danger that powerful chemical and industrial forces in West Germany might turn to production of atom bombs and other mass destruction weapons. I would remind you that Annex II of Article 107 of the EDC Treaty mentions bacterial, atomic and chemical weapons among industries to be developed and that former German military bio-chemists and bacteriologists in the West have already been called up for training!

Thus we see that there is no legitimate reason for rearming Western Germany; that it carries appalling dangers, and that it must be stopped. Happily, there are immense forces against it. Not only in the new socialist countries, not only in Britain (where the forces include, I think, a majority of the Labour Party and a number of Trade Unions), not only in France and Italy, but also (in great numbers) in West and East Germany itself, masses of people from almost all sections of the population realise the dangers and rally against them.

And the prospects of success in building up positive plans for European security — which include above all the reunion of Germany — itself the greatest contribution to European security, grow always greater. One of our tasks here will be to consider how best the great movement we represent can contribute to success in this field.

West German Shorts

Immediately after their completion on May 18th, three dynamite chambers built on the roadside between Krefeld and Dusseldorf in West Germany were filled in with rubble by protesting citizens armed with shovels and hand-carts.

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Peasants are protesting strongly against the intended confiscation by British occupation forces of some hundreds of acres of farm land in Arnsberg, Westphalia. The land is a former nazi Wehrmacht manoeuvre ground which the peasants have reclaimed since 1945.

•

Thousands of acres of forest and heath land were burnt down early in May in the districts of Soltau, Sennelager and Bergen-Belsen, British Zone, to make room for spring manœuvres by British troops.

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

On other pages of this issue we report on the great Whitsun Rally of young people in Berlin, which has just ended as we go to press. I am writing these lines before the Whitsun weekend, however, so it seems to me to be a good opportunity to recall the first Whitsun Rally of the Free German Youth in 1950.

I was at that time Chief Correspondent in West Berlin for Reuters News Agency, so I was to some extent on the outside, looking in. But I got a very good look, just the same, and even after the passage of four years I can still remember very vividly what I saw.

For the first time since the war, and one might almost say for the first time in German history, hundreds of thousands of young people, from both East and West Germany, who were determined to build a better homeland, and above all a peaceful homeland, had come together; many of them, particularly those from West Germany, had previously been feeling rather isolated, but when they got to Berlin they saw in the most convincing way that they were only a small part of a great movement.

New Strength

This knowledge that hundreds of thousands of other young people were marching together with them down the same road gave them new strength, and since the 1950 Whitsun Rally the youth movement for peace has gained greatly both in members and in experience.

In West Germany, the Free German Youth has been prohibited, and many of its leading members have been held in prison for long periods on flimsy charges of "preparing to commit high treason", but there too the youth movement has been in the forefront of the campaign against a new Wehrmacht.

But I should like to say something of what I myself experienced, as a "western correspondent", four years ago. The Whitsun Rally began with the formal opening of the "Pioneer Republic", a wonderful park with sports facilities, open-air theatre, and many other attractions for the under-14's on the outskirts of Berlin.

I attended the opening ceremony, in which tens of thousands of happy Young Pioneers participated: the sky was overcast, but luckily no rain fell.

When the ceremony was over, I hurried back to my office in West Berlin, and sent a story of a few lines to Reuters in London: I only sent a few lines because I knew that a western news agency would only be interested in a longer story about events in the east if it was a "horror" story.

Laughter in the House

"The hateful coordination of the German press began in the nazi Third Reich and some members of this house had a hand in it at that time (storms of laughter and applause). I am a real Christian, however, and I am inclined to forgive them their sins (renewed laughter)."

(From the official shorthand report of a speech delivered in the West German Parliament on May 21st 1954 by Christian Democratic Deputy Dr Dresbach).

About half an hour after sending the story to London, I received an angry telegram from Reuters, London. As far as I can remember, it went something like this:

"UNITED PRESS REPORTS THOUSANDS HUNGRY BAREFOOTED CHILDREN FORCED TO STAND IN POURING RAIN IN EASTERN OPENING CEREMONY STOP WANT MATCHER."

(In news agency parlance "matcher" means a similar story to that sent by a competing agency, and in practice is often a broad hint to the correspondent to lay the horror on even thicker than Associated Press, United Press, or whoever was responsible for the original story.)

I replied roughly in these words:

"UNITED PRESS UP POLE STOP IT DIDNT RAIN COMMA MOST CHILDREN WERE CHEWING HUGE SAUSAGE SANDWICHES COMMA I ONLY SAW THREE CHILDREN WITHOUT SHOES ON COLON THEY WERE CARRYING THEM BECAUSE THEY HAD BLISTERS."

But most big business papers printed the United Press story anyway.

A few days later came the great demonstration of hundreds of thousands of young people in their cornflower blue shirts through the streets of East Berlin. On this day it really did pour with rain, with short intervals of sun, but nothing could damp the spirits of the young people marching. I was on a press stand with dozens of hard-bitten and fairly cynical journalists from Britain, America and other countries; at the beginning of the march past they were aggressively neutral, declining to wave back or even to smile as the thousands moved past.

But the atmosphere of friendliness was so contagious that first one and then another started to wave back to the marchers. At first they did it apologetically, and pretended that they were just waving at a pretty girl they had seen, but the pretence did not last long. By the end of the day quite a lot of the "hard boiled correspondents" were even joining in the songs sung by the young people as they swung by.

Short Effect

Of course the effect was not very long-lasting, and in fact some of the very same correspondents were soon back in West Berlin hammering out on their typewriters the tired old stories about "regimented youth", and the sullen scowling faces that they suddenly remembered seeing all day long.

But at least a seed of something different was left in the brains of some of them. A few weeks ago, in Geneva, I met one of the American correspondents who had stood beside me in the press box on that Whitsun Sunday in 1950. He remembered the tune and a few of the words of one of the youth songs he had learned that day: "Let's get on with the job of rebuilding, building for a better future."

And when he was sure that none of his compatriots were overhearing the conversation he said: "You know, ever since I saw that rally and talked to those young people, I haven't been able really to stomach those stories in our papers about East Germany — about the starvation, and the discontent, and about the young people being militarised in a new sort of Hitler Youth. It just doesn't add up with what I saw at that Whitsun Rally."

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